AUDITORY JELLYTOTS

Name: Chris Johnson
Website: http://auditoryjellytots.weebly.com/

"I suspect that music is auditory cheesecake, an exquisite confection crafted to tickle the sensitive spot of at least six of our mental faculties. A standard piece tickles all of them at once, but we can see the ingredients in various kinds of not-quite-music that leave one or more of them out." (Pinker, *How the Mind Works,* p534) If, as Steven Pinker puts it, music is the cheesecake of life, then nostalgia must be Jellytots. A 21st century childhood sweet that has no really value, except perhaps the memory that people have of it and the importance and value placed upon it. There is currently great work going on in the Indie game market. Games like *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*, which explores the artistic side of a crime thriller, with its beautiful scenery and complete lack of any help or direction. Or like the brutally difficult *Gods Will Be Watching* a 16bit strategy game that causes you to invest real time and real effort into keeping you and your friends alive. "Technical advances have lately cleared away prior hurdles in game audio design. In terms of sound quality and material complexity, soundtracks of modern games easily hold their own" (Cheng, *Sound Play* p77)

This project is a response to these emerging art works, the 21st century human brains love of nostalgic music. "One of the brains tricks as it identifies the soundmakers of the world is to pay attention to harmonic relations. The inner ear dissects a blare into its component frequencies, and the brain glues some of the components back together and perceives them as a complex tone." (Pinker, *How the Mind Works,* p535) and the emerging music that new technologies have embraced. "When coupled with images, music influences the way we perceive them, and adds value to the audence's audio-visual experience. A good media composer can manipulate the user's experience by using specific musical functions" (Hoffert, *Music for New Media* p63). Building on the scientific research like the 'lifespan retrieval curve' (imaging your life as a graph of remembered moments that stretches

from your birth to present) and the 'reminiscence bump' (the bump in the graph that is the section of time you will most likely be nostalgic for) first observed by Franklin and Holding and, further explored and named by David Rubin and his colleagues. Using those scientifically proven and researched ideas to manipulate nostalgia in person. "The nostalgic response results from the complex interaction of present experience and past memory, coexisting in the same temporal moment. Although the idea of nostalgia has in the seventeenth-century medical profession as a severe form of homesickness, today it has taken on a broader set of meanings, expanding to include things and places we have neither experienced nor seen."(Kizzire, *Music in Video Games* p183)

This project is built using all of these various perspectives and concepts into an interactive hunt for short clips of music that tap into the player's nostalgia. "Interactive media let users determine their story flows, and so interactive soundtracks must be composed accordingly, providing musical options that match the story options." (Hoffert, *Music for New Media* p8). The game is platformed on the block building game Minecraft and uses the basic structure that all games are based on. "Individual levels typically have clearly defined missions that set the player's goals and structure the tasks they must complete to finish the level. The designers should plan the game and its levels in such a way that the game creates a coherent experience for the player. Often this means that designers use various mechanics to control how players can move through a game." (Adams/Dormans, *Game Mechanics: Advanced Game Design* p30-31). This game has primarily objective driven gameplay and takes the form a score based system where the player is scored on how many nostalgic clips they find and then rewarded for completion. The reward takes the form of a new area where the player is taken to and presented with all the music clips from the game labelled and presented, in a kind of final celebration

of nostalgia where the player has the chance to relive or be nostalgic for the previous experience.

"The most monumental works of art in human history have different layers of meaning that appeal to different audiences" (Adams/Dormans, *Game Mechanics: Advanced Game Design* p294). This game also contains hidden chests that the player can find which contain pieces of texts with critical quotes in them, this allows the ability for overlap and random interplay between the musical clips. "Umberto Eco points out that having multiple layers of meaning in a single work of art is good for three reasons: It gives the work a wide appeal to many people. It invites the audience to explore the work in different ways (you might say it creates replay value). Contrast and contradictions between different layers of meaning create the opportunity for humour and irony." (Adams/Dormans, *Game Mechanics: Advanced Game Design* p294). The freedom given by this game allows for a large amount of coincidental moments to work or work against each other this coupled with the deeply subjective childhood cartoon themes creates an audio visual experience that change drastically player to player. This provides the player with a perspective ranging from positive childhood joy to irritated scepticism on how they view this so-called shared nostalgia of the 21st century.

References

Devolover Digital. *Gods Will Be Watching,* Microsoft Windows (2014)

Ernest Adams, Joris Dormans, *Game Mechanics: Advanced Game Design,* New Rider Games (2012)

John Robertson. *The Dark Room,* Performed at Edinburgh (2014)

K.J. Donnelly, William Gibbons, and Neil Lerner, *Music in Video Games,* Jessica Kizzire, Chapter 10, New York and London Routledge (2014)

Paul Hoffert, *Music for New Media: Composing for Videogames, Web Sites, Presentations, and other Interactive media,* Berklee Press (2007)

Pinker Steven, *How the Mind Works.* London: Penguin Books (1999)

The Astonauts. Nordic Games. *The Vanishing Of Ethan Carter,* Microsoft Windows (2014)

Tom Scott. *I Know What You Did 5 Minutes Ago.* Recorded at Ignite London 4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYVBshcN7wU (2011)

Tom Scott. *Is This You.* Recorded at the Electromagnetic field https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcPhMqLPuvQ&list=UUBa659QWEk1AI4Tg--mrJ2A (2012)

William Cheng, *Sound Play: video games and the musical imagination,* Oxford University Press (2014)